2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

585 Maur or Oil Crown, which is worn during the period when the bride and bridegroom are anointed with oil and haldi, and the Lagir Maur, which is put on immediately before the critical moment of the marriage.

The customs vary from place to place. After the marriage the Oil Crown is generally thrown into a stream with some small offerings to the Yer Kanyang. The other crown is sometimes tied to the central pillar of the bridegroom's house. In Palari members of the Marrai clan bury the crown by this pillar and make offerings of liquor to the Departed above it, in order that the wife will always be faithful to her husband. In Kokori the Naitami and Marrai clans put the crowns in a hollow tamarind tree standing in the village. Other clans tie them to the pillars of their houses. Here they throw pulse and rice on the crowns in the name of the Departed. In the north of the State, at Penjori for example, when they are grinding haldi, preparing oil and husking rice in preparation for the marriage, the chelik and motiari go in procession to the ghotul and tie a little crown to the pillar in the name of Lingo. They then go to the Hanalkot and tie another crown there in the name of the Departed. In the Bara Dongar Pargana they sometimes tie the crown after the marriage in the shrine of the clan-god.

Even when a chelik or motiari has left one ghotul and joined another, his old ghotul may remember him at the time of his marriage by tying a crown to their pillar. This was done in 1940 at Penjori when the chelik put up a crown for a boy who had left them a year before to work as Lamhada for a girl in Kanker.

THE FOURTH DAY

I was not able to see the ceremonies of the fourth day at Sidhawand, but at Malakot I saw them twice; the procedure was, I believe, the same at Sidhawand.

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Fig. 21. Squirt, used in fun for spraying people with water at a marriage
Length 5′ 7″

After the ceremonies of welcome to the new daughter-in-law were concluded, or on the following morning, bride and bridegroom were brought out of the house and made to stand together on an old mat.

Wherever I have seen this done, the couple affected the greatest distaste and stood averted from each other's presence. The attendant motiari first handed the boy a toilet-twig; he gave it to the girl and she threw it away. He gave her another one, and she threw that away also. Then she gave him one and he threw it away. He took a fourth and cleaned his teeth with it, and gave it to her. She cleaned her teeth and threw it down.

This rite may symbolize the intimacy of married life—I am not sure. The next appears to be a test of potency. The chelik gave the bridegroom a number of stout poles about six feet long. He handed them to his wife; she threw some away and returned others to him and he had to break them. The boys had already notched them half way down so this was not very difficult.

Suddenly without warning the boy seized his bride and spat in her mouth. When she had recovered, she handed him a gourd of water; he filled his mouth

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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

791 787 When these mediums carry a clan-god or the litter of a Matal (Village Mother) on their shoulders, they seem to act quite involuntarily and in an astonishing unison. I have seen four men bearing an Anga perform the most complicated evolutions, twisting and turning in every direction, and all in

[293 787]

FIG. 27. Decorated wooden 'horse', with horns of the barking deer, used for ceremonial dances
Length of wooden section 3′ 4″

unison without a word of command or hint where they are to go next. It is little wonder that the Muria place implicit faith in the movements of these men and accept the divinations of the Anga as final.

What is the explanation of this trance? It is well known that in the condition of 'ligature', as Pratt observes, the 'voluntary control of the muscles is

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and for this reason the dance is sometimes known as Nei Kolang or Kukur Kolang.

At Phulpar the chelik said that they took with them whatever dog wandered round their fire and sat down near its ashes, but in other villages I have been told that they only take a dog which is carefully trained, for it is essential that it should not bark or bite or have anything to do with other dogs. In Udanpur they said that the dog was taught to dance.

The dog serves both as a mascot and to take the omens. The boys remove a bell from the shrine of the Village Mother and tie it round its neck in the name of Lingo. When they dance in a circle the dog must sit in the middle. At meal-times, the Gain gives it three handfuls of rice before anybody else is fed.

When the dancing party enters a village the chelik wait to see what the dog will do. If all is well, it sits down quietly and they stay. If it wanders off into the village and enters someone's house, it means that a pair of boys will die. If it runs out into the fields even late in the evening, it is a sign that they must move on at once. If it fights with another dog, someone will die. Should the dog leave the party and return home, it is taken as a warning of great danger.

When the chelik return to their village they sacrifice two chickens for the dog, though a boy has to be content with one, and they place stones for it on a cairn. They remove the bell from its neck and replace it in the shrine of the Village Mother. From the time the bell is tied round the dog's neck to the time it is removed, no member of the party may have sexual intercourse. But once the bell is removed, it is a sign that they are free.

In most villages the same dog accompanies the party for three years running, but at the end of that period it is expected to go mad or to be carried away by a tiger. The theory is that for three years Lingo 'possesses' the dog for the brief period of the expedition, but at the end of the time he takes the form of a tiger and carries it away.

FIG. 117. Ornamental stick carried on dancing expeditions
Full length 2' 7½"

When all is ready, about a week before Cherta-puni, the chelik put on their full dress and dance all day. They are rather solemn about this; they talk to no one and take a very superior attitude towards their girls and have nothing to do with them. The next morning, the Gaita takes them to the Village Mother's shrine where the spear of Maria Pen is kept. They dance before the shrine in a straight line, not in a circle; this is the 'Lingo Par'. The Gaita brings fire from his house in a length of smouldering rope spun from paddy-stalk fibre. With the aid of this he offers incense saying, 'These youngsters are going out to dance. Let no disease attack them on the way. Bring them home safely. Let the spear be their aid and Maria Pen go with them. If they return in safety I will give food-sacrifice'. He fixes the smouldering rope on the point of the spear and brings it out.

This was the custom in Phulpar and Kollibera; in the latter village the Gaita went on to the shrine of Thakur Deo and worshipped there with the same

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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GHOTUL EXPEDITIONS

Song

Whose sticks are these, mother-in-law?
The sticks of our clan, mother-in-law.
The sticks shine in the sun, mother-in-law.
Come out to see the sticks, mother-in-law.
In your left hand bring a lamp, mother-in-law.
In your right hand bring water, mother-in-law.
Quickly, quickly give us greeting, mother-in-law.

Probably to the Muria mind the constant repetition of 'mother-in-law' is amusing; a second song is also humorous.

On Kachgudgud Hill is a hare, chelik.
The hare has teeth as big as a chopper, chelik.
Its moustaches are like spear grass, chelik.
Its hairs are like a pile of bamboo shavings, chelik.[1]

From the Gaita's house the chelik move round the village, dancing before each house in turn and collecting a little rice. Meanwhile the motiari are busy collecting rice themselves; they cook this in the ghotul, and later serve it to the boys in their camp. At night boys and girls dance together, but without their sticks.

In the morning, the boys give the girls two or four pice and try to hit them when they accept it. When they reach the village boundary on their way to the next village, the little rite of crossing over a sacred line is repeated. Before reaching the new village, they halt somewhere by a stream and cook the food that they have just collected, lighting the fire from the need-fire on their spear. Then they go on and repeat the same programme.

At last the expedition is over; the days of taboo will soon be at an end; the boys approach once more their own village. News of their coming has preceded them and their motiari have not been idle. In Khutgaon I was told that they went out with the rest of the village to catch hares for the boys' feast. But everywhere the girls take the Gaita out into the jungle and make him cut one or two small semur trees. The semur tree is chosen because it was a semur which grew up out of the stump of the gold-covered

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FIG. 118. Dummy guns carried on dancing expeditions

bamboo which Lingo himself cut down at the end of the first Pus Kolang expedition. In some villages the boys say that the semur is chosen because Lingo

[1] For similar humour, see my *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, pp. 150ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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used to shelter beneath it when he was alive. Obviously there is a reference to Semurgaon, the village where Lingo is said to have turned into a stone and now has his shrine. The semur has the added advantage that its spikes frighten off magic and demons. A small semur is chosen because a bigger one might be inhabited by the ghost of some dead chelik. The bare branches of the tree that suddenly blossom with bright red flowers may symbolize the menarche or nuptial fertility.

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FIG. 119. Dancing-sticks from Remawand

The semur must be cut very carefully. The motiari offer rice and pulse before it saying, 'As our boys went out well and happy, so well and happy may they return'. As the Gaita cuts it the girls stop it falling to the ground, for should it do so, it is believed that a pair of dancers will die on the way and not return.

They then tie a saja leaf round the stumps of the trees and carry them back either to the ghotul compound, or to an open space in the middle of the village, wherever the ashes of the fire by which the omens were originally tested are to be found. If the trees, after being planted, do not stand up straight it is believed that disaster is in store for the boys. The motiari make small mud platforms, whiten them with clay and sometimes decorate them with drawings of the chelik.

These platforms are to be left for three years, though I doubt if this is often done, but it is important that at the end of the proceedings the semur trees should be pulled up. Should they sprout with renewed life it means that the Gain and his mate will die. In Ghotulbera this actually happened and now the trees are always pulled up and thrown away.

After the platforms have been made, the motiari prepare a lot of leaf-pipes, bundles of tobacco and toilet-twigs. Where there are two trees, one is for the leaders of the party, the Gain and Jokta, the other for the rest. This is an anxious and exciting day for the motiari; their chelik have been away amidst unknown dangers to the heart and spirit; they must do all they can to please them. This evening they cook in the ghotul or near the boys' camp in an enclosure of branches.

When the boys reach home, they go first to the Gaita's house and dance there. They then proceed to the ghotul or to their camp, where they put the spear into the ground near the semur trees and dance round them. After a time they gather about the trees and suddenly all cry *Hurrî* and hang their dancing-sticks on the branches. They remove their special clothes and hang these too on the branches. They take the pipes and tobacco from the trees and smoke them. The next morning they clean their teeth with the toilet-twigs which the motiari have provided. They are home again.

In Koilibera in 1941, the boys reached the village in the morning and spent the day dancing and collecting grain. In the evening, after they had danced round the semur trees, the Kaser-Gaita made little squares with coal-dust, rice-flour and haldi at the foot of each tree, and offered incense with the aid of the need-fire that the boys had now brought home. The chelik gathered round him and their leader offered him the sacred bunch of peacock's feathers and after exchanging this three times, the priest hung it on the first tree. Then the boys hung up their dancing-sticks and turbans. The rest of their attire was packed in little baskets and put under a tree.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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You would not see that sort of thing on a Pus Kolang expedition. As a chelik described it at Chandabera, 'We all go together for the Mahua Dandar and have great fun. No one has a right over any girl and all play with each other'. Occasionally boys and girls of different villages fall in love and run away together.

V.. The Diwali Dances

But of all the opportunities for romantic adventure so liberally provided by Muria society, none is more exciting than the girls' Diwali dance. The word 'Diwali' is here simply an indication of date; the dances have nothing to do with the Hindu festival. Even the dates are usually wrong; I saw Diwali dances on 18 November 1940 at Binjhli, on 24 November at Remawand and on 27 November at Bandopal. The actual Diwali that year was on 24 October. I saw it again at Sirpur on 30 October 1941, though the real festival was a fortnight earlier.

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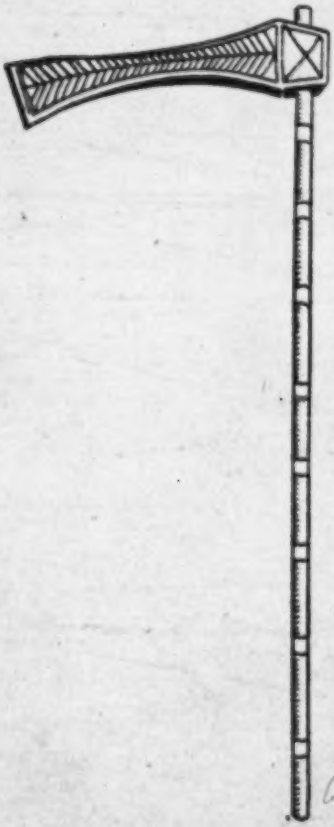

Fig. 122. Ornamented wooden axe carried by the leader of the girls on a Diwali expedition

During this season the motiari go from village to village, singing and dancing. But to the east of the main road, the Diwali is only danced in a few villages; to the south of Kondagaon it is almost unknown. Instead boys and girls go together for the Hulki.

Sometimes, the Diwali is abandoned for a time because of a scandal, sometimes on supernatural grounds. In Talabera, the girls cannot dance or sing at all, for if they do a god (*deo*) attacks them. He makes the girls tremble and fall to the ground: the Gaita has to spit and beat them with a stick to get rid of him.

There does not seem to be any special religious or magical purpose in these expeditions; they are simply for enjoyment and amorous adventure. Only girls go, led by their Belosa, and when they visit any village, only the boys of that village may be present to entertain them. The visitors dance first at the Gaita's house, then through the village; they camp in the ghotul; the local boys cook for them and entertain them. In the evening, the visiting girls and the local boys dance and play together and the dancing often lasts all night. During those long hours every one of the visitors is taken away into the jungle; the more attractive ones may be taken several times. The evenings are fruitful of love-affairs and sometimes a chelik now meets his future wife. A boy from Kapsi told me that he met

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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FIG. 123. Toy used on Chhetia expeditions
Length 6' 8"

FIG. 124. Toy used on Pus Kolang and other expeditions
Length 4' 6"

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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In Alor Shamrao Hivale found some very elaborate gongs. They are illustrated in Plate CV and Fig. 125. Each gong is a single piece of wood hollowed out in the middle with a carved beak at one end and at the other a flat strip with a hole in the centre. Into this slot there fits a 4″ peg projecting from a small support on which stands the wooden figure. Through the peg there is a small hole to take a wooden pin which fixes the figure firmly in position. The figures are male and female. The male is slightly taller, standing 15½″ from the base. The female is ¼″ shorter. The two figures are differentiated by the shape of the genital organs and by small breasts in the female and a lozenge-shaped pattern on her body, probably intended to represent the womb. The hair is roughly indicated by carved lines and is different in the two images. The man has the five fingers of each hand carved on either side of his thighs where he is supposed to be holding his hands. This feature is absent in the female image. The male rectum is shown but not the female. The entire length of each gong is 2′ 6½″ from end to end. The slot in the middle is 10½″ long, ¾″ broad and 2″ deep.

●[243]

FIG. 126. Dancing-stick from Remawand

Among other things taken out for the Chherta and Pus Kolang expeditions, I have seen masks[1] of various kinds (illustrated in Plates XCIX, CII, CIII) and dancing-sticks. At Gorma I saw a *Chherta-gujir*, very like the dancing-sticks of the Bison-horn Maria, made of an old umbrella rod, with a bunch of iron bells at the top. At Remawand was a stick called *jarar-bargar*; it had an iron crown fitted with rings.[2] Decorated wooden guns are also carried.

The songs used during the Chherta are confused and obscure, a series of disconnected images and symbols, though there is always one song concerned with straightforward begging. I will give examples of both kinds.

Songs

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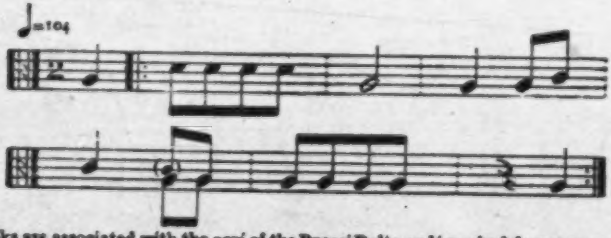
[1] Masks are associated with the *ravi* of the Purari Delta and 'masked dances or ceremonial parades are a common institution in New Guinea'. In the *ravi* masks are worn during the initiation of boys, when there is a taboo upon garden produce and in a mortuary ceremony in which a masked figure represents the spirit of the dead revisiting his home.—R. Firth, *Art and Life in New Guinea* (London, 1936), p. 26.

[2] This type of musical stick is similar to that carried by postal runners in the neighbouring Jeypore Zamindari.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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Plate CIII

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Pus Kolang mask

[p. 528 (N)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate CIV

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The Malik of the Kongera ghotul in dancing dress

[p. 528 (R)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

The basis of this dress is a very commonplace shirt and a white skirt with red bands, held in place by a wide sash, all of bazaar cloth. The chelik wear on their heads either turbans tied straight round to make a sort of box or a round cap of bamboo lattice-work covered with red cloth with one end hanging down behind as a streamer. This *topi*, as it is called, is decorated with feathers, cowries, coloured balls borrowed from the motiari and anything else available. When a turban is worn, it is similarly decorated and has one or two long streamers, or strings of cowries hanging down behind.

Round their waists the chelik tie a cord and attach to it bunches of small and big bells which hang above their buttocks.[1] I once saw a boy with a large wooden cow-bell. From the shoulders hangs the very distinctive dancing-shield called *moghi*. This is a circular shield of carved wood or basketwork, with bamboo hoops underneath to support it away from the back and often four smaller hoops of bamboo or brass on the upper side, through which are threaded more streamers of red, white or blue cloth (see Fig. 33).

FIG. 138. Iron Jew's harp
Length 3½"

Sometimes coloured shawls are thrown over the shoulders spoiling the effect, since they conceal the shields. I have only once seen the older type of Hill Maria 'rib-waistcoat', and that was at Bandopal where the boys covered their waistcoats with folded strips of white cloth so arranged as to look like a series of ribs down the body. Round their necks the boys wear masses of ornaments, many of them borrowed for the occasion from their sisters and cousins.

Every dancer must carry something over his shoulder. Nowadays this is often an umbrella, though an umbrella decorated with strings of cowries or even bunches of fruit. Traditionally the Hill Maria carried a large pharsa battle-axe over his shoulder: the Muria still sometimes make exaggeratedly large wooden pharsa, carved wooden godel axes, sticks with bunches of peacock feathers tied to the top; the less enterprising carry ordinary pharsa and godel axes and even wooden sticks.

The most interesting objects carried by the Muria for their festival dances are the 'horses', or *hokti* as they are called (Figs. 27, 29). These are roots of trees chosen because their shape roughly resembles the head of a horse, often a fringe of smaller roots being left on the upper side to indicate the mane. This 'horse' is given horns or ears by fixing pointed bits of wood, barking-deer horns, or the tusks of the wild boar to the front of the 'head'. From its nose hang long streamers of white feathers, and the nose itself is often decorated with crisscross patterns. Into the back of the *hokti* are fixed three or four ornamented sticks each with a tuft of feathers at the end. The general effect, specially when a very large number of these 'horses' appear together, is magnificent.

[1] These buttocks-bells, which are characteristic of the Hill Maria, have also been recorded in the Coorg area of the Western Ghats. See M. B. Emeneau, *JAOS*, Vol. LIX, p. 132.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

times in a little house of their own, sometimes in a room lent to them by an old widow. Where there is a separate hut, this is sometimes also used for the segregation of menstruating women. In a few places there are special buildings for this purpose. The houses of the headmen are not built in any special position, but those of the Siraha medicine-men can generally be distinguished by the little huts for patients which are built round them. On the outskirts of the village will be found the shrine of the Village Mother, and in a grove nearby there may be the temple of one of the clan-gods. Beyond is the village burial place and cremation ground. Rows of menhirs in memory of the Dead may be seen in the majority of villages.

There is no standard pattern for the Maria house any more than there is for the Maria village. Most of the houses consist of three rooms, each a separate building with eaves at different levels, which make them look, as Grigson says, 'like card houses'. The first room, which is really a built-in verandah, is the kitchen. It leads into a bedroom and this in turn opens into an inner and secret room mostly occupied by a platform for storing grain and other possessions; in one corner is the Pot of the Departed about which centres the Maria cult of the Ancestors. Frequently two or more such houses are built round a courtyard, part of which is occupied by a more or less open building where people sit to talk and work.

Maria women's dancing-stick (3½' long)

The houses are generally clean and pleasant, but littered with a great variety of domestic and agricultural impediments. Outside are the pig-styes and cattle-sheds,

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

535 but with a great variety of turns and changes: the 'bison'
585 charge and fight each other, pick up rings or leaves on the points of their horns, and chase the girl dancers. The girls, each with a dancing-stick in her right hand, form a long line and go round and through the men dancers with many different movements and steps. They do not usually sing, and indeed the tune would be lost in the thunder of the drums. As they go, they beat the ground with their sticks *dum-dum-dum, di-dum, dum-dum.* Masked mummers, clowns dressed in straw, naked acrobats with enormous imitation genitalia, add to the gaiety of the scene. There is no finer dance in India.

293 The head-dress of bison horns is the chief treasure of a Maria home. It is kept with the utmost care, dismantled, in closed bamboo baskets, and it takes nearly an hour to assemble it. Horns are rare nowadays in Bastar and have to be imported from Jeypore. A Maria may give a bull in exchange for a pair of good horns; they should be white at the bottom turning to black half way up.

A bamboo frame forms the base of the head-dress. The horns are attached to the front and a great tuft of feathers rises behind. Cloth, often old and costly silk, is tied round and round and a tail hangs down behind. Across the front a fringe of cloth adorned with cowries covers the dancer's eyes.

The feathers used are those of the peacock and of domestic
[237] cocks specially castrated for the purpose. It is considered
[197] unlucky for a feather to fall to the ground during a dance, and before they begin the dancers address the Earth Mother and the Ancestors: 'Save us from the dangers of magic and let none of the feathers fall'.

428 A man's head-dress passes to his son or brother's son after
682 his death. His bow and arrow and his drum are also heir-
762 looms and are highly valued. The loss of a head-dress drove one Maria youth to suicide, and a dispute about possession of an outfit of buttocks-bells led another to murder.

184 In the north of the area, many Maria dance both with bison
535 horns and in Hill Maria fashion. The latter wear the skirt, decorated cap and streamers, and buttocks-bells characteristic of the Abujhmar Hills.

534 The Maria are not very good at musical instruments. They use a small fiddle called kikir, a Jews-harp made of iron or

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria
Hill Maria

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Youth with Hill Maria dancing-dress

Markami Marka wearing head-dress

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Boys preparing head-dress

[FACING p. 80]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

674 he was only outraging his personal marital feelings. Kopa
607 was working as Poda's Kabari or farm-servant at Kaurgaon on the banks of the Indrawati River. Five years before the murder Poda discovered that the boy was enjoying a love affair with his wife, taking advantage of the privileged relationship in which he stood to her. A ceremony of purification and appeasement was performed and Kopa left Ragho alone for a time. But they were evidently really in love with one another, and soon their intimacy began again. In July 1933, Poda discovered this and turned Kopa out of his house and service. Kopa went to live with another cousin in the same village.

On the night of Sunday 30 July, Kopa crept into Poda's house in the middle of the night in order to lie with Ragho. But while they were together, her hand accidentally knocked against her husband who was sleeping by her side and woke him. Kopa ran for his life, but not before he had been recognized.

The following day news came that a member of the family in another village, Chota Karka, had died, and Poda with Ragho, Kopa and other relatives went to the place for the funeral ceremonies. On the Wednesday there was an open quarrel there between the two men, and Poda told the elders of the village of Kopa's behaviour and beat him publicly. Kopa ran away and hid in the forest. Then on the Thursday everyone went home.

That afternoon three of Poda's servants were working in his field, weeding the kosra crop. In the field there was
[343] the usual field-hut in which the cultivators rest and guard the crops. It was raining that day, and at about 4-30 in
● [293] the afternoon Kopa arrived there carrying a bamboo umbrella and sat down by the fire in the field-hut to dry himself. A little later Poda came and when he saw who was sitting there he fell into a great rage. He beat Kopa several times with his bare fists, knocked him on his back, sat on his chest and throttled him with both hands. The three servants did not dare to interfere, but stood watching.

Then Poda had the body taken to another hut in someone else's field, tied a rope round the neck of the corpse, and strung it up to the roof to give the impression that the dead man had committed suicide. He bribed the witnesses and